

BBC Radio settles India dispute

LONDON, UK: BBC Radio's Test Match Special programme will broadcast live from venues during England's forthcoming tour of India.



The announcement follows speculation Test Match Special faced a "lockout" from an England tour for the first time in nearly 40 years because of a dispute over additional payments with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

BBC chiefs have not commented publicly on British press reports the BCCI were demanding an extra £50,000 (US\$81,000) in addition to the already-agreed fee for broadcasting rights.

But a spokesman said Thursday that listeners could look forward to live coverage from grounds during the four-Test series which starts at Ahmedabad on 15 November.

"We are pleased to confirm that Test Match Special will broadcast England's cricket tour of India from the grounds after agreement was reached with all parties," a BBC spokesman said.

'Live' broadcasts - but not from India

Meanwhile, satellite broadcaster Sky, which holds the UK rights to live television coverage of England Tests from both home and abroad, rather than pay a reported additional £500,000 to the BCCI are set to have commentators at their headquarters near London's Heathrow Airport working off a 'live' picture feed from India.

By contrast Test Match Special considers it essential that its commentators are at the ground. This differentiates it from the rival TestMatchSofa.com broadcast service owned by the *Cricketer* magazine.

BBC cricket correspondent Jonathan Agnew, an investor in the *Cricketer* until it bought TestMatchSofa last year, was involved in a Twitter row with *Cricketer* editor Andrew Miller over the issue on Thursday.

'Too ghastly to contemplate'

"I've never read such hypocrisy & assumed knowledge as that spouted by the once great *Cricketer* magazine today," tweeted former England seamer Agnew.

"I won't be reading it again." Miller questioned how the BBC had got themselves into an "extraordinary situation... having paid for the rights without checking they would be allowed in... It makes you wonder what they are paying licence-fee payers' money for."

He was responding to an article attacking TestMatchSofa in Wednesday's *Times* by Christopher Martin-Jenkins, Agnew's predecessor as BBC cricket correspondent.

"The thought of having to listen to the predators who purport to be producing commentaries from a sofa or armchair without paying a penny to the England and Wales Cricket Board for the rights is too ghastly to contemplate," wrote Martin-Jenkins.

"The sooner they are nailed and swept offline, the better."

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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